Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------054105 050602Z /14
R 021610Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5988
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 6005

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT LE
SUBJ: DRUZE LEADER IN QUANDARY: WALID JUMBLATT

1. SUMMARY. WALID JUMBLATT SAYS DRUZE ARE TIRED OF ARAB CAUSE AND HE WOULD LIKE TO DISENGAGE FROM PALESTINIANS. HE CONTINUES TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT MARONITE, SYRIAN AND, NOW, EGYPTIAN INTENTIONS, HOWEVER. HE ASKS THAT WE URGE SARKIS TO MOVE AHEAD ON NATIONAL CONCILIATION. HE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO KNOW WHAT WE CAN TELL HIM ABOUT SYRIAN INTENTIONS. IF HE IS SERIOUS ABOUT DISENGAGING FROM PALESTINIANS, THIS IS POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT.

2. DRUZE LEADER WALID JUMBLATT CALLED ON ME AT HIS REQUEST DECEMBER 1. IN BRIEF, HE SAID SYRIANS WERE TRYING TO LURE HIM INTO SUPPORTING THEIR ANTI-SADAT CAMPAIGN BUT HE HAD REFUSED TO DO SO. FEW REMARKS HE HAD MADE AT SPORTS CITY AT CLOSE OF NOV. 19 RALLY (BEIRUT'S 5805) SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. HE WOULD LIKE TO DISENGAGE HIS DRUZE FROM PALESTINIANS; THEY WERE TIRED OF THE ARAB CAUSE AND WANTED TO WORK FOR LEBANON. HE KNEW THIS WAS SCANDALOUS THING TO SAY, BUT IT REPRESENTED HIS REAL FEELINGS.

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3. I NOTED PRESS REPORT HE HAD DECLINED INVITATION TO REJECTIONIST SUMMIT AT TRIPOLI. HE SAID ASSAM KANSO HAD COME TO HIM DAY BEFORE AND TRIED TO TALK HIM INTO GOING BUT HE HAD REFUSED. SYRIANS WERE TRYING TO GET HIM TO FORM BROAD NATIONAL FRONT, BUT THIS WOULD MEAN SUBORDINATING DRUZE INTERESTS TO THOSE OF SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS AND, WHATEVER HE MIGHT SAY PUBLICLY,

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HE WAS OPPOSED TO THIS. PEOPLE ACCUSED HIM OF BEING TOO INVOLVED WITH SYRIANS. THAT WAS TRUE, BUT HE WAS INVOLVED BECAUSE HE FEARED THEM, PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY KILLED HIS FATHER. HE HAD ASKED THE SOVIETS ABOUT THE SYRIANS AND THEY HAD REPLIED VERY SLOWLY WITH STANDARD PHRASE ABOUT UNITY IN SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIANS.

4. WALID SAID HIS FATHER HAD DIED FIGHTING FOR A CAUSE. PERHAPS THAT CAUSE WAS MISTAKEN, BUT KAMEL JUMBLATT HAD FOUNDED A NATIONAL MOVEMENT WHICH WAS IMPORTANT. WALID WANTED TO PRESERVE THAT MOVEMENT'S INDEPENDENCY FROM OUTSIDE INFLUENCE, BUT HE COULD NOT STAND ALONE. HIS ATTEMPTS TO GET ASSURANCES FROM MARONITES HAD BEEN REBUFFED. HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR INTENTIONS AS HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THOSE OF SYRIANS. WHY WERE SYRIANS PERMITTING KATAEB TO TRAIN AND ARM SO OPENLY, WHILE NOT LETTING HIM DO MORE THAN HAVE A BOY SCOUT PARADE? WHAT LAY BEHIND SADAT'S REMARK TO THE FINANCIAL TIMES ABOUT BLOOD FLOWING IN LEBANON? WAS LEBANON TO BE TORN AGAIN BY A QUARREL BETWEEN EGYPT AND SYRIA? I SAID SADAT WAS TALKING OFF TOP OF HIS HEAD. JUMBLATT NOTED THAT SADAT WAS WELL INFORMED. HE HAD SUPPLIED ARMS TO CHRISTIANS AS WELL AS PALESTINIANS DURING THE FIGHTING AND COULD PERHAPS GET SUPPORT FROM THE KATAEB.

5. I SAID THAT FOLLOWING OUR EARLIER DISCUSSIONS I HAD

RAISED WITH THE CHAMOUNS THE POSSIBILITY OF A RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE JUMBLATTS BUT HAD GOTTEN NOWHERE. THE SCARS OF THE LAST THREE YEARS WERE STILL TOO FRESH AND IT WOULD BE SOME TIME BEFORE MARONITES AND DRUZE FELT EASY WITH EACH OTHER. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVED MARONITE-DRUZE COEXISTENCE WAS ESSENTIAL TO PEACE AND STABILITY OF LEBANON. WHAT WAS IT HE WANTED US TO DO? WALID SAID THERE WERE TWO THINGS. FIRST, HE WOULD LIKE US TO GET PRESIDENT SARKIS TO MOVE FORWARD MORE ACTIVELY IN PURSUIT OF A NATIONAL CONSENSUS. SARKIS KEPT POSTPONING ACTION WHILE AWAITING SETTLEMENT OF THE SOUTH. THERE WAS NOT GOING TO BE ANY SETTLEMENT. THE PALESTINIANS WERE NOT GOING TO WITHDRAW AND THE SYRIANS WERE NOT GOING TO APPLY ANY PRESSURE ON THEM TO DO SO BECAUSE ASSAD NEEDED PALESTINIAN SUPPORT.

6. SECONDLY, HE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT SYRIAN INTENTIONS WERE TOWARDS HIM AND TOWARDS LEBANON AS A WHOLE. WHAT COULD WE TELL HIM IN THAT REGARD?

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INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 6005

EXDIS

7. I PROMISED TO RAISE QUESTION OF NATIONAL CONSENSUS NEXT TIME I SAW SARKIS, REFERRING TO OUR CONVERSATION WHEN I DID SO. HAD HE TALKED TO SARKIS HIMSELF ON SUBJECT? WALID SAID HE HAD, BUT SARKIS AND BOUTROS WERE UNWILLING TO MOVE. THEY WERE AFRAID OF MAKING A MISSTEP. HAT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE, BUT ALL OF US HAD MADE TERRIBLE MISTAKES AND SURVIVED. WITHOUT SOME RISK THERE WAS NO PROGRESS.

8. WITH REGARD TO HIS SECOND POINT, I SAID EVERY LEBANESE FROM BACHIR GEMAYEL TO SAEB SALAAM WAS SUSPICIOUS OF THE SYRIANS. WHILE NO ONE KNEW WHAT LAY IN THE HEARTS OF MEN, ASSAD HAD APPEARED GENUINELY INTERESTED IN PEACE AND STABILITY IN LEBANON. HE HAD REAFFIRMED TO AMBASSADOR MURPHY AS RECENTLY AS THIS WEEK HIS COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAURA ACCORD, AND HE AND EVERY OTHER SYRIAN WE TALKED TO SEEMED ANXIOUS TO GET THE SYRIAN ARMY OUT OF LEBANON SOONER RATHER THAN LATER. THEY COULD NOT DO SO UNTIL THE SITUATION IN THIS COUNTRY HAD STABILIZED. MEANWHILE, THEY COULD NOT CONTROL EVERYTHING THE KATAEB DID. PERHAPS THEY HAD ASSURANCES FROM THE GEMAYELS THAT THEY WOULD NOT CAUSE TROUBLE. AS TO THE EGYPTIANS, IT WAS HARD TO SEE WHO, EXCEPT
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MAYBE THE DRUZE, MIGHT BE WILLING TO FIGHT ON THEIR BEHALF TODAY.

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9. I THEN TOLD WALID THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAD AUTHORIZED AN IV GRANT FOR HIM AND WE WOULD BE PLEASED TO ARRANGE A TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES FOR HIM WHEN HE WAS READY. WE ASSUMED HE WANTED TO SEE THE DRUZE COMMUNITY AND TO MEET OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON, BUT WE WOULD ARRANGE VISITS ELSEWHERE ACCORDING TO HIS WISHES. HE SEEMED PLEASED AND SAID HE WOULD THINK ABOUT DATES ETC. AND LET ME KNOW.

10. COMMENT: IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT WALID CAME TO SEE THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR ON THE DAY HE WAS INVITED TO BE WITH THE REJECTIONISTS AT TRIPOLI. THIS WILL NOT BE MISSED LOCALLY. (DEC. 2 PRESS REPORTS ERRONEOUSLY THAT WE MET FOR TWO HOURS. WALID OR HIS ENTOURAGE MUST HAVE PUT STORY OUT.) IF HE IS SERIOUS IN HIS DESIRE TO GET OUT FROM UNDER HIS PALESTINIAN AND SYRIAN CONNECTIONS, THIS IS A POTENTIALLY IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT. I PLAN TO DISCUSS WITH BOUTROS AT EARLY OPPORTUNITY. IN MEAN-TIME, WOULD APPRECIATE ANYTHING DAMASCUS CAN SAY ABOUT SYRIAN INTENTIONS WHICH WE COULD PASS TO JUMBLATT. WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL, OF COURSE, AND PERHAPS WE SHOULD JUST FINESSE QUESTIONS. ON OTHER HAND, IF WE ARE CONFIDENT OF SYRIAN GOOD INTENTIONS, IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO LET WALID KNOW.
PARKER

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